William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* and Literary Correlations: Intertextuality in Practice

Khalid Mohamed Easa

Department of English Studies, University of Tobruk, Libya
Email: khalid.easa@tu.edu.ly

Abstract— The paper investigates the intertextuality in William Golding's Lord of the Flies by exploring its literary connections with R. M. Ballantyne's The Coral Island and Robert Louis Stevenson's Treasure Island. It examines how Lord of the Flies incorporates and subverts elements from these two earlier novels to create new meanings, especially through irony and the questioning of morality. By engaging in a comparative analysis of the island as a setting, the study reveals that these novels, while ostensibly adventure stories, explore deeper themes related to human nature, civilization, and savagery. The research demonstrates that understanding these intertextual relationships provides readers with a richer interpretation of Golding's work, showing how it transcends its narrative to engage in a broader literary conversation. The work contributes to the field of intertextual studies by illustrating how texts build on and transform the meanings of earlier works, particularly through Golding's critique of romanticized depictions of island life and human virtue.

*Keywords— **Conflict, Civilization, Intertextuality, Irony, Morality.***

I. INTRODUCTION

Focusing on Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954), which deliberately refers to and incorporates R. M. Ballantyne's The Coral Island (1857) and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1882), this research will determine the intertextual construction within the novel.

It analyzes the functions of those intertexts within their new intended contexts. How does Golding's novel lend itself to intertextuality and create interrelations with the other two novels? The study discusses how knowledge or recognition of intertextuality and how it functions within each given text helps readers gain a more profound comprehension and interpret texts beyond the surface meaning.

The purpose of intertextuality is to expand the semantic horizons of a particular text by negotiating possible literary correlations. It examines the role of a go-between, linking one text with another in direct allusions and invoking structural, cultural, and historical narratives.

In this sense, intertextuality suggests signifying characters, incidents, and situations that intersect with another text to create a place and objects that "are never single, complete and identical to themselves, but always plural, shattered, capable of being tabulated" (Kristeva, 1984, pp. 59–60). It refers to a literary practice in which the reader formulates or finds interpretive passages linking two texts.

II. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Agreeing with Bakhtin, Kristeva asserts that intertextuality illustrates how "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (1980, p. 66). Intertextuality, as a term, has a long history. Julia Kristeva used the term in the 1960s. Still, the idea had been previously formulated by French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and Russian formalist Mikhail Bakhtin, suggesting that texts can always be indirectly in dialogue. Further expanding readings of intertextuality, Gerard Genette's theory of palimpsests illustrates how

intertextuality persists in Literature and permeates all texts as it "hover[s] between originality and imitation" (Morgan, 1989, p. 270).

Genette argues that "each literary or aesthetic text produces a palimpsest, superimposing several other texts which are never completely hidden but always hinted at" (Morgan, 1989, p. 271). In *Palimpsests*, Genette argues that intertextuality explains how texts transcend their own textual, cultural, and historical boundaries as they establish a relational existence with other texts. Bearing intersectional features in mind, it is noteworthy to argue that the concept of the primary setting for a novel is not quite alien to the novel tradition in England and Europe. Stevenson, however, explains that the idea of *Treasure Island* is inspired by sheer coincidence as he was watching his stepson toying with a box of paints. Stevenson enjoyed drawing a map of a fictional island: "As I paused upon my map of 'Treasure Island,' the future characters of the book began to appear there visibly among imaginary woods; and their brown faces and bright weapons peeped out upon me from unexpected quarters … The next thing I knew I had some papers before me and was writing out a list of chapters" (Hammond, 1984, p. 101). Nevertheless, the development of the island genre can be traced back to 1719, when Daniel Defoe published *Robinson Crusoe*, whose mysterious island provided the ideal location away from human establishments. Other novels came later on, such as S. H. Burney's *The Shipwreck* (1816), and Sir Walter Scott's *The Pirate* (1822), which expanded the tradition of Defoe's classical book. However, other novelists in the nineteenth century contributed to that tradition, such as James Fenimore Coopers's *The Pilot* (1823). Another influential American writer is Edgar Allan Poe, who wrote short pieces such as "MS Found in a Bottle" (1833) and "The Gold Bug" (1843). These works, among others, paved the way for Stevenson's masterpiece. After Stevenson's novel, other writers, of course, continued the tradition, such as William Golding's remarkable *Lord of the Flies* and John Fowles' *The Magus*. There is also H. G. Well's *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (Hammond, 1984, p. 107), which can provide the human experience in isolation, whether geographical or psychological.

Most of these texts intersect and speak to each other regardless of the author's intentions. Roland Barthes, for instance, has introduced a theory of the death of the author that has greatly informed the conceptualization of intertextuality: "writing is the destruction of all voices, all origins … From the moment the event is recounted … the author enters into his/her own death, the writing begins" (1994, 491). He points out that the notion of authorship is a 20th-century concept and that, in early local communities, "the story is never put into motion by a person, but rather by a mediator, a shaman or storyteller, whose 'performance' one can necessarily admire but not his/her 'talen'" (p. 491). Barthes's conceptualization of the author's death has opened interpretive horizons for how texts intersect, not necessarily as authors intended, as long as there is textual evidence to support the suggested correlations among literary texts.

III.   INTERSECTIONAL ASPECTS IN THE SUGGESTED NOVELS

Treasure Island is an adventure story that narrates the voyage and the maturation of the protagonist, Jim Hawkins. Similarly, *Lord of the Flies* explores how the protagonist, Ralph, undergoes a rite of passage. Both novels intersect as tales of conflicts represented in the island's image, which signifies two concepts: first, the futility of human desires such as greed, and second, the clash between civilization and savagery. Both novels explore the pleasures of inner desires. Most characters are driven by greed since they all want treasure or dominance. For example, in *Treasure Island*, the island for the pirates turns out to be disappointing as the treasure map leads them to an empty hole, whereas in *Lord of the Flies,* the island becomes a disappointing hunt quest for jack. This island in both texts represents a location of loss and futility and a place where savagery and civilization meet.

As the novels' titles ironically suggest and imply, the island becomes a displeasure island instead of a treasure island and the dwelling place of the devil, the lord of the flies. Like Stevenson, Golding seems to argue that there is a savage in every one of us. Sometimes, the savage aspect takes over imminently, as in the case of the pirates and Jack, or emerges by degrees, like the other men or kids as they live on the island.

Julia Kristeva believes that every text is "the space in which several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" (1984, 5). As a case in point, the moral significance embedded in the island is unavoidable and sought after by both Stevenson and Ballantyne. A touch of morality is essential even in tales of romance:

[Romance] may be nourished with the realities of life, but their true mark is to satisfy the nameless longings of the reader and to obey the ideal laws of the daydream. The right kind of thing should fall out in the right kind of place; the right kind of thing should follow, and not only the characters talk aptly and think naturally, but all the circumstances in the tale answer one to another like notes in music. (Blake, 1963, p. 165)

Stevenson questions the value of this treasure if one has to sacrifice one's truthfulness as he attempts to find it. Stevenson suggests that this hunt, based on greed, is dehumanizing and the island becomes a brutal place in relation. This is a clear case of intertextuality since Kristeva (1984) asserts how meaning exists in the intersectional relationship between texts.

The text is not a static and fixed body but a hyper representation that can be readily subverted, subtracted, or substituted. The pirates, for instance, in *Treasure Island* lose part of their humanity once they are on the island.

Similarly, the kids on Golding's Island lose their humanity and become doomed to destruction. Ironically, the island transforms them into fools as the treasure lies hidden somewhere else, and they cannot uncover it. Traces of that descent into folly can be seen in Golding's Island as the kids engage in ridiculous superstitious thoughts about the beast in the absence of grownups and order. Moreover, Stevenson questions the actual value of the whole voyage to the island if the treasure to be lost, that is, the human soul is more important than the material gold sought after. The concept of the island, in this sense, "thematizes questions about value and accurate representation, about romance and its debasement, and in so doing reveals that the bourgeois economic and moral systems, in the words of Marx and Engels, are actuated by "naked self-interest" rather than by "purer" devotion to God or country" (Wood, 1998, p. 66). Likewise, In *Lord of the Flies*, Simon's encounter with the pig's head represents self-interest in goodness and kindness in the face of life's cruel realities.

The island, in all three novels, signifies the value of a civilized society as it allures characters from their ordered culture into primitive locations. For example, in *Treasure Island*, Ben possesses the treasure, yet he is almost mad and living in a cave because the treasure is of no value on the island. Without the formation and laws of a society that places value on gold, the treasure means nothing. Likewise, Golding's Island becomes a source of nightmares and not dreams. Life on the island reveals to the dwellers that savagery is a human characteristic that is neither gendered nor racially related. In effect, the notion of the island becomes an archetype that questions the reader's unwarranted sense of human nature and society: "It recalls for young and old the truths about themselves and their society … the young reader cannot shy away from the suggestions of youth's limitations: its nightmarish loneliness; its tangential relationship to the adult society; its impulsive action only sometimes successful, often foolish; and its inability to know others and especially itself" (Saposnik, 1974, p. 107). Therefore, the image of the island intersects as a literary trope that implicitly questions cultural values and raises identity issues rather than a location for sheer adventure stories.

The novel's world as simple romance starts to disappear as the reader observes that Stevenson uses the magical appeal of the island to criticize human nature. The map, for instance, functions as a magic object that draws people into an adventure. The crew becomes bad-tempered and restless as they approach the island in burning-up weather. Dr. Livesey warns the men that they may be at risk of contracting tropical diseases on the island. He observes that the air smells of rotting wood, which might produce fever and illness. In short, Jim seems justified in his remark that "from that first look onward, I hated the very thought of Treasure Island" (p. 106). It points out that the island's sight brings Jim sad thoughts. The island's mental image becomes repulsive, symbolizing alienation from civilized society. Likewise, in Golding's novel, the island atmosphere of the absence of any civilized society gives more space for the reader to see the kids' irresponsibility and lack of forethought, which gives them animalistic behaviour. Similarly, Stevenson depicts the pirates as entirely unable to take care of their own lives in any responsible way. Like the pirates, the kids in Lord of the Flies have no concept of themselves as a group or a social structure, and the island seems like the perfect place for them to live in disorder. Both kids and pirates are indifferent and fail to build a social structure of membership.

The concept of the island in both Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and Golding's *Lord of the Flies* signifies the conflict between civilization and savagery through its description of its locale and the characters' futile desires once they arrive. Although the early mode of the novels' opening chapters is that of a romantic quest, a paradox here creates an intertextual correlation. This paradox exposes the notion that winning the treasure might mean losing something more endearing, our own humanity, as we greedily pursue the gold that is the worldly gain in life. In Golding's novel, it means losing law and order, which led to two world wars in his lifetime. The island offers that lesson and that experience to both characters and readers alike. The intersectionality of the island serves a symbolic function of picturing the human battle against savagery and the human endeavour to eradicate, if not at least diminish, the world's evils.

Despite the dreadful impression that the island leaves in the character's imagination, Stevenson and Golding do not forget to romanticize the beauty of nature on the island. Stevenson points out here that nothing in the world comes in either black or white. He points out that the island, like humans, can be good and evil, ordered and uncivil. In effect, when writing about the island, Stevenson's and

Golding's detailed description conjures vibrant images in the reader's imagination. For example, they describe the old, melancholy woods, rocky stones, or the voice of the crying sea birds, the crashing sound of the surf breaking against the rocks, the deep plant life, the waterways streaming into a pond, and the wide-open sand. All these details transform the island into a magical world that intersects with Shakespeare's world of *The Tempest*.

Katherine J. Goodnow (2010) points out that corresponding texts "do not have to be in the same medium as the specific text one is considering: books for books, for instance, or films for films. Those may be the background texts that one thinks of first" (p. 13). That said, there are many resemblances in terms of direct and specific references between *The Coral Island* and *Lord of the Flies*:

Published in 1858, Coral Island maintained great popularity, and Golding incorporated a number of its characteristics into his novel in order to satirize it … Golding even had characters in Lord of the Flies specifically refer to Carol Island. Early in Golding's book, when the characters are still excited about being on the beautiful island, they mention Carol Island, hopeful that they can mimic its atmosphere" (Bloom, 2010, p. 12)

Similarly, Baker (1963) argues that "everything comes of in exemplary style" with the use of "sheer moral force" to easily defeat evil (p. 299). The identical names of the two principal characters, Ralph and Jack, are the most obvious example. The relationship between the boys is criticized and portrayed more realistically.

Dangers described in *The Coral Island* are mostly external such as sharks, pirates, and the savages, whereas threats are mostly internal on Golding's Island. What the kids dread is the evil from within and not necessarily external to their psyches. The actual conflict, Golding tells us, is man vs. man and not man vs. nature. Golding himself refers to Coral Island as one of the motivations for writing his novel: "For example, having been one of a mass of English schoolboys who read Robert Ballantyne's idealized island adventure book Carol Island, Golding explained that he wanted to write a realistic alternative to it" (Bloom, 2010, p. 12). Stevenson's and Golding's novels intersect with Gallantyne's in that the island does not function only in terms of exposing negative energies or dim realities in characters. In *Treasure Island*, it reveals in Jim a heroic desire in his character. Jim continues to display his bent to go after impulses and private desires.

For instance, Jim's impatience and anger when cleaning up the blood from the slaughter are logical and reasonable. His willingness to do something better and heroic is understandable. Likewise, in *Lord of the Flies*, what is so

admirable is Ralph's refusal to lie down and whimper about his task as an appointed leader to his group. In other words, he does not simply sits and fantasizes about a heroic act but follows through.

The island, in this sense, magically reveals in both Jim and Ralph a heroic character that has been hidden from themselves. The island, therefore, serves as a source of inspiration. In this sense, it provides a coming-of-age opportunity for Jim and Ralph rather than a simple adventure experience. In other words, the island presents itself with symbolic value.

Bakhtin (1986) discusses the phenomenon of intertextuality with specific reference to Shakespeare's works as "semantic treasures" embedded "in the strata of … popular language … in the diverse genres and forms of speech communication … that were shaped through millennia" (p. 4). The teacher's Shakespearean task is, therefore, to look for forms that carry these "semantic treasures," adopted by artists whose works are constructed "not out of inanimate elements, not out of bricks, but out of forms that were already heavily laden with meaning, filled with it" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 5).

The experience on the island is the treasure itself, personal and semantic as it offers meaning to the readers. Looking at a text intertextually provides an open-ended, interpretative possibility for readers to help them generate meaning. Every text has a mimetic nature that contributes to its semantic and intertextual richness.

IV. CONCLUSION

This Study examined intertextual correlations between Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) and two previously published novels, namely R. M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1857) and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1882). It explored how texts function to support their intended contexts.

It asked the following questions: How does Golding's Lord of the Flies speak intertextually to the other two novels? What are the textual correlations, and what do they signify? How does Golding's Lord of the Flies exemplify intertextuality?

The study, therefore, responded to these questions by identifying moments of how intertextuality functions within each given text to elicit meaning mainly through irony and a subversion of the theme of morality and the genre of romance.

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